Rethinking Homeownership

Why owning a home may no longer make economic sense

BY BARBARA KIVIAT
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Homeownership has let us down. For generations, Americans believed that owning a home was an
axiomatic good. Our political leaders hammered home the point. Franklin Roosevelt held that a country of
homeowners was "unconquerable." Homeownership could even, in the words of George H.W. Bush's
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Jack Kemp, "save babies, save children, save
families and save America." A house with a front lawn and a picket fence wasn't just a nice place to live
or a risk-free investment; it was a way to transform a nation. No wonder leaders of all political stripes
wanted to spend more than $100 billion a year on subsidies and tax breaks to encourage people to buy.

But the dark side of homeownership is now all too apparent: foreclosures and walkaways, neighborhoods
plagued by abandoned properties and plummeting home values, a nation in which families have $6
trillion less in housing wealth than they did just three years ago. Indeed, easy lending stimulated by the
cult of homeownership may have triggered the financial crisis and led directly to its biggest bailout, that of
Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Housing remains a drag on the economy. Existing-home sales in July
dropped 27% from the prior month, exacerbating fears of a double-dip. And all that is just the obvious tale
of a housing bubble and what happened when it popped. The real story is deeper and darker still.

For the better part of a century, politics, industry and culture aligned to create a fetish of the idea of
buying a house. Homeownership has done plenty of good over the decades; it has provided stability to
tens of millions of families and anchored a labor-intensive sector of the economy. Yet by idealizing the
act of buying a home, we have ignored the downsides. In the bubble years, lending standards slipped
dramatically, allowing many Americans to put far too much of their income into paying for their housing.
And we ignored longer-term phenomena too. Homeownership contributed to the hollowing out of cities
and kept renters out of the best neighborhoods. It fed America's overuse of energy and oil. It made it
more difficult for those who had lost a job to find another. Perhaps worst of all, it helped us become
casually self-deceiving: by telling ourselves that homeownership was a pathway to wealth and stable
communities and better test scores, we avoided dealing with these formidable issues head-on.
Now, as the U.S. recovers from the biggest housing bust since the Great Depression, it is time to rethink how realistic our expectations of homeownership are — and how much money we want to spend chasing them. As members of both government and industry grapple with re-envisioning Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and the rest of the housing finance system, many argue that homeownership should not be a goal pursued at all costs.
The Two Jobs Reports

By ZACHARY KARABELL

Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

At the end of the first week of July, the U.S. Department of Labor released its monthly jobs report. It showed continued weakness in employment and helped trigger a new wave of concern about the health of the U.S. economy. On July 20, a different "jobs" report was released — this one by the CEO of Apple. In his company's second-quarter earnings announcement, Steve Jobs declared that Apple had surpassed expectations and posted record revenue and earnings. In addition to computers, Apple sold more than 8 million iPhones in the spring quarter and more than 3 million of its new iPad tablet devices. What's more, sales of the iPhone were up more than 60% from a year earlier.

The contrast between the two jobs reports is startling. So too is the commentary surrounding them. Understandably, the employment situation in the U.S. dominates public attitudes about the economic health of the country. Overall anxiety about economic prospects — along with high government borrowing and private indebtedness — casts a gray pall over Americans, so much so that our time is coming to rival the 1970s as a byword for gloom and pessimism. If you take a look around the globe, the American funk stands in sharp contrast to the dynamism of China, Brazil, India and many other countries. An optimism gap has opened up between the world of new players in the emerging economies and an old world of arthritic Europe together with a grumpy, out-of-sorts America.

And then there is the Steve Jobs report, which paints a radically different picture. Go into an Apple store and you will find 20-somethings, 30-somethings and even some 40-somethings snatching up gadgets that sell for hundreds or thousands of dollars, none of which is essential to daily life. Yes, you may need a mobile phone to get by, but you don't need an iPhone. A much cheaper LG handset will do the trick.

Apple is a source of endless commentary, not all of it favorable. The new iPhone 4 had an issue with dropped calls, which led to clips on YouTube parodying the company that have been watched millions of times. But think about that for a minute. If a flawed antenna on a luxury gadget attracts such a level of attention on social-networking sites that are themselves only a few years old and are the product of billions of dollars of venture capital, how does all that square with the sense of an economy in peril? And it's not just Apple that makes us ask such a question. Nintendo, the maker of the hugely popular Wii gaming systems, has sold 30 million units over the past three and a half years — each costing a few
hundred dollars, not including the many extras and games. Coach, a maker of high-end bags, has been recording stellar sales throughout the past two years.

Yet we are told almost daily that the American consumer is deleveraging, paring back, fleeing financial markets and confronting an uncertain future with diminished 401(k) plans or state pensions that are about to get whacked. And those warnings are not simply screeds voiced by pundits and politicians. They are true. Government data shows that Americans on aggregate are saving more (as much as 8% in recent months) and using less credit; surveys of business sentiment have found it to be lousy; and state pensions are indeed in sorry shape.

The conflicting pictures are a paradox. (Just as they are in Europe, by the way; the horror stories of Greek debt didn't preclude hordes of German tourists descending on the Aegean this summer, undoubtedly complaining about having to bail out Greece while spending thousands of euros there.) It would seem that both jobs reports couldn't simultaneously be true — yet they are.

How come? Because we live in a world where the idea of a common, shared economic experience is largely a fiction. The two jobs reports can be completely contradictory and true because they represent the behavior and situation of radically different groups. The iPhone buyers are younger, the sort of folk who were neither burned by the stock-market blowout of 10 years ago nor hurt when the subprime-borrowing bubble burst in 2007-08. They may share an anxiety about the future with the millions of unemployed and underemployed, but they do not experience the same material hardships. They face an uncertain world, sure — but they have incomes. And they represent a majority of the country.

The disruptions of the past few years have wrecked the lives of millions, and that is reflected in persistently high unemployment and sluggish growth. The inability of the American system to solve those problems dominates our public discussion, which reflects well on a society not content with uneven rewards. But the endless debate is also a national pathology, a relentless paying of attention to what is broken without sufficient appreciation for what is not. Each jobs report says something vital, and we do ourselves no service by ignoring either.

Net Wit

By JOEL STEIN Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

I am neutral on most things that don't involve food or sex or sexfood, which does not yet exist but which I already feel strongly about. But I am against Net neutrality. That's the idea being pushed by the President, the FCC and people who write comments on blogs and want everything to be free except what they happen to do for a living. Net neutrality would set up rules to make sure your Internet provider treats all information equally; no website would be able to pay to move more quickly. This sounds good because
people like the fact that the Internet has no barriers to entry. But that’s the worst thing about the Internet. It's why looking for information about Net neutrality requires clicking around for three hours, since each site is written by some dude who knows as little as you do.

Illustration by John Ueland for TIME

I like that everything is allowed to be on the Internet, which is like a planet-size bookstore with, for some reason, a continent-size section for pets doing stupid things. But I like that at a real bookstore, I can instantly tell the difference between works by actual historians and works by conspiracy theorists, since the real books are printed on good paper with pretty covers and the others are smudgy pamphlets. We need to bring those barriers of entry to the Internet, and speed is a key way to do it.

Senator Al Franken, at the Netroots Nation conference in late July, talked about a dystopian future without Net neutrality: "How long do you think it will take before the Fox News website loads five times faster than Daily Kos?" Hopefully, this will happen right away. Fox News should load 20 times faster than Daily Kos, because far more people read it. It's better for society that millions of people get someplace a little faster while the relatively few Daily Kos readers wait a few seconds. This is why not all roads are the same width. And more people go to the Fox News site because it's got tons of people reporting, balancing and fairing, whereas two of the contributing editors at Daily Kos are named DarkSyde and Angry Mouse.

Bandwidth is an increasingly limited resource, and we've got to figure out a better way to allocate it. You're grateful that your cell-phone carrier nonneutrally allows 911 calls through first, phone calls second (so they don't break up), instant messages next and Web searches last. But because some people hog bandwidth by pirating movies all day, we don't have doctors supervising real-time surgeries online, video calls that don't look like dispatches from the Mir space station or decent real-time video games. My Web connection is slow largely because some idiot on the block is spending hours downloading porn. The fact that the idiot is me makes me feel only a tiny bit better.

In order to save the Internet, I did what any good American does: volunteer to help. Unlike any American before, however, I had no one to offer my services to besides a corporate lobbyist: CTIA — the Wireless Association. Still, I was excited because I'd be volunteering my services to CTIA president and CEO Steve Largent, a Hall of Fame NFL wide receiver, former Congressman and one of PEOPLE's most beautiful people in 1996. Meanwhile, many people who advocate Net neutrality are, in my opinion, not even average-looking.
One great thing about volunteering for a lobbying firm rather than an organization that helps kids read is that lobbyists call back really fast. I told Largent I thought my best contribution would be to help politically frame the cause by coming up with a catchy name to compete with "Net neutrality," the way antiabortion people came up with "pro-life" in response to "pro-choice." I suggested a bunch of cool slogans that I figured people would love, such as "Net dynamism," "Net awesomeness," "Net Justin Bieber" and, from my knowledge of marketing here at TIME, "Net special anniversary collector's issue." But Largent and his team came up with "Net works," which I like a lot. "Because it is working," he said. "People are having an amazing wireless experience. The opposition is for a regulated Internet." Then he said a lot of boring things that made me realize I wouldn't mind if some of my cell-phone calls didn't go through.

Like Largent, I believe that as great as the Internet is, it can be better. And we shouldn't create laws that prevent companies from making it better. So I'm going to fight on for Net works, even if that means continuing to have incredibly boring conversations with people about this topic. I'd even be willing to distract the FCC from its reckless goals by showing them my nipple. Those people lose their minds over that.
How the Stimulus Is Changing America

By MICHAEL GRUNWALD

Thursday, Aug. 26, 2010

New juice Obama, right, tours a huge solar array in Nevada. Catching rays is easy; storing and shipping solar energy is harder.

John Locher / Getty Images

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 — President Obama's $787 billion stimulus — has been marketed as a jobs bill, and that's how it's been judged. The White House says it has saved or created about 3 million jobs, helping avoid a depression and end a recession. Republicans mock it as a Big Government boondoggle that has failed to prevent rampant unemployment despite a massive expansion of the deficit. Liberals complain that it wasn't massive enough.

It's an interesting debate. Politically, it's awkward to argue that things would have been even worse without the stimulus, even though that's what most nonpartisan economists believe. But the battle over the Recovery Act's short-term rescue has obscured its more enduring mission: a long-term push to change the country. It was about jobs, sure, but also about fighting oil addiction and global warming, transforming health care and education, and building a competitive 21st century economy. Some Republicans have called it an under-the-radar scramble to advance Obama's agenda — and they've got a point.

Yes, the stimulus has cut taxes for 95% of working Americans, bailed out every state, hustled record amounts of unemployment benefits and other aid to struggling families and funded more than 100,000 projects to upgrade roads, subways, schools, airports, military bases and much more. But in the words of Vice President Joe Biden, Obama's effusive Recovery Act point man, "Now the fun stuff starts!" The "fun stuff," about one-sixth of the total cost, is an all-out effort to exploit the crisis to make green energy, green building and green transportation real; launch green manufacturing industries; computerize a pen-and-paper health system; promote data-driven school reforms; and ramp up the research of the future. "This is a chance to do something big, man!" Biden said during a 90-minute interview with TIME.

For starters, the Recovery Act is the most ambitious energy legislation in history, converting the Energy Department into the world's largest venture-capital fund. It's pouring $90 billion into clean energy,
including unprecedented investments in a smart grid; energy efficiency; electric cars; renewable power from the sun, wind and earth; cleaner coal; advanced biofuels; and factories to manufacture green stuff in the U.S. The act will also triple the number of smart electric meters in our homes, quadruple the number of hybrids in the federal auto fleet and finance far-out energy research through a new government incubator modeled after the Pentagon agency that fathered the Internet.

The only stimulus energy program that's gotten much attention so far — chiefly because it got off to a slow start — is a $5 billion effort to weatherize homes. But the Recovery Act's line items represent the first steps to a low-carbon economy. "It will leverage a very different energy future," says Kristin Mayes, the Republican chair of Arizona's utility commission. "It really moves us toward a tipping point."

The stimulus is also stocked with nonenergy game changers, like a tenfold increase in funding to expand access to broadband and an effort to sequence more than 2,300 complete human genomes — when only 34 were sequenced with all previous aid. There's $8 billion for a high-speed passenger rail network, the boldest federal transportation initiative since the interstate highways. There's $4.35 billion in Race to the Top grants to promote accountability in public schools, perhaps the most significant federal education initiative ever — it's already prompted 35 states and the District of Columbia to adopt reforms to qualify for the cash. There's $20 billion to move health records into the digital age, which should reduce redundant tests, dangerous drug interactions and errors caused by doctors with chicken-scratch handwriting. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius calls that initiative the foundation for Obama's health care reform and "maybe the single biggest component in improving quality and lowering costs."

Any of those programs would have been a revolution in its own right. "We've seen more reform in the last year than we've seen in decades, and we haven't spent a dime yet," says Education Secretary Arne Duncan. "It's staggering how the Recovery Act is driving change."

That was the point. Critics have complained that while the New Deal left behind iconic monuments — courthouses, parks, the Lincoln Tunnel, the Grand Coulee Dam — this New New Deal will leave a mundane legacy of sewage plants, repaved roads, bus repairs and caulked windows. In fact, it will create new icons too: solar arrays, zero-energy border stations, an eco-friendly Coast Guard headquarters, an "advanced synchrotron light source" in a New York lab. But its main legacy will be change. The stimulus passed just a month after Obama's inauguration, but it may be his signature effort to reshape America — as well as its government.

"Let's Just Go Build It!"

After Obama's election, Depression scholar Christina Romer delivered a freak-out briefing to his transition team, warning that to avoid a 1930s-style collapse, Washington needed to pump at least $800 billion into the frozen economy — and fast. "We were in a tailspin," recalls Romer, who is about to step down as chair of Obama's Council of Economic Advisers. "I was completely sympathetic to the idea that we shouldn't just dig ditches and fill them in. But saving the economy had to be paramount." Obama's economists argued for tax cuts and income transfers to get cash circulating quickly, emergency aid to states to prevent layoffs of cops and teachers and off-the-shelf highway projects to put people to work. They wanted a textbook Keynesian response to an economy in cardiac arrest: adding money to existing
programs via existing formulas or handing it to governors, seniors and first-time home buyers. They weren’t keen to reinvent the wheel.

But Obama and Biden also saw a golden opportunity to address priorities; they emphasized shovel-worthy as well as shovel-ready. Biden recalls brainstorming with Obama about an all-in push for a smarter electrical grid that would reduce blackouts, promote renewables and give families more control over their energy diet: "We said, 'God, wouldn't it be wonderful? Why don't we invest $100 billion? Let's just go build it!'"

It wasn’t that easy. Utilities control the grid, and new wires create thorny not-in-my-backyard zoning issues; there wasn’t $100 billion worth of remotely shovel-ready grid projects. It’s hard to transform on a timeline, and some congressional Democrats were less interested in transforming government than growing it. For instance, after securing $100 billion for traditional education programs, House Appropriations Committee chairman Dave Obey tried to stop any of it from going to Race to the Top, which is unpopular with teachers’ unions.

Ultimately, even Obama’s speed focused economists agreed that stimulus spending shouldn’t dry up in 2010. And some Democrats were serious about investing wisely, not just spending more. So House Speaker Nancy Pelosi insisted on $17 billion for research. House Education and Labor Committee chairman George Miller fought to save Race to the Top. And while the grid didn’t get a $100 billion reinvention, it did get $11 billion after decades of neglect, which could shape trillions of dollars in future utility investments.

It takes time to set up new programs, but now money is flowing to deliver high-speed Internet to rural areas, spread successful quit-smoking programs and design the first high-speed rail link from Tampa to Orlando. And deep in the Energy Department’s basement — in a room dubbed the dungeon — a former McKinsey & Co. partner named Matt Rogers has created a government version of Silicon Valley’s Sand Hill Road, blasting billions of dollars into clean-energy projects through a slew of oversubscribed grant programs. “The idea is to transform the entire energy sector,” Rogers says. “What’s exciting is the way it fits all together.”

"They Won’t All Succeed"
The green industrial revolution begins with gee-whiz companies like A123 Systems of Watertown, Mass. Founded in 2001 by MIT nanotechnology geeks who landed a $100,000 federal grant, A123 grew into a global player in the lithium-ion battery market, with 1,800 employees and five factories in China. It has won $249 million to build two plants in Michigan, where it will help supply the first generation of mass-market electric cars. At least four of A123’s suppliers received stimulus money too. The Administration is also financing three of the world’s first electric-car plants, including a $529 million loan to help Fisker Automotive reopen a shuttered General Motors factory in Delaware (Biden’s home state) to build sedans powered by A123 batteries. Another A123 customer, Navistar, got cash to build electric trucks in Indiana. And since electric vehicles need juice, the stimulus will also boost the number of U.S. battery-charging stations by 3,200%.

"Without government, there’s no way we would’ve done this in the U.S.,” A123 chief technology officer Bart Riley told TIME. "But now you’re going to see the industry reach critical mass here."
The Recovery Act's clean-energy push is designed not only to reduce our old economy dependence on fossil fuels that broil the planet, blacken the Gulf and strengthen foreign petro-thugs but also to avoid replacing it with a new economy that is just as dependent on foreign countries for technology and manufacturing. Last year, exactly two U.S. factories made advanced batteries for electric vehicles. The stimulus will create 30 new ones, expanding U.S. production capacity from 1% of the global market to 20%, supporting half a million plug-ins and hybrids. The idea is as old as land-grant colleges: to use tax dollars as an engine of innovation. It rejects free-market purism but also the old industrial-policy approach of dumping cash into a few favored firms. Instead, the Recovery Act floods the zone, targeting a variety of energy problems and providing seed money for firms with a variety of potential solutions. The winners must attract private capital to match public dollars — A123 held an IPO to raise the required cash — and after competing for grants, they still must compete in the marketplace. "They won't all succeed," Rogers says. "But some will, and they'll change the world."

The investments extend all along the food chain. A brave new world of electric cars powered by coal plants could be dirtier than the oil-soaked status quo, so the stimulus includes an unheard-of $3.4 billion for clean-coal projects aiming to sequester or reuse carbon. There are also lucrative loan guarantees for constructing the first American nuclear plants in three decades. And after the credit crunch froze financing for green energy, stimulus cash has fueled a comeback, putting the U.S. on track to exceed Obama's goal of doubling renewable power by 2012. The wind industry added a record 10,000 megawatts in 2009. The stimulus is also supporting the nation's largest photovoltaic solar plant, in Florida, and what will be the world's two largest solar thermal plants, in Arizona and California, plus thousands of solar installations on homes and buildings.

The stimulus is helping scores of manufacturers of wind turbines and solar products expand as well, but today's grid can only handle so much wind and solar. A key problem is connecting remote wind farms to population centers, so there are billions of dollars for new transmission lines. Then there is the need to find storage capacity for when it isn't windy or sunny outside. The current grid is like a phone system without voice mail, a just-in-time network where power is wasted if it doesn't reach a user the moment it's generated. That's why the Recovery Act is funding dozens of smart-grid approaches. For instance, A123 is providing truckloads of batteries for a grid-storage project in California and recycled electric-car batteries for a similar effort in Detroit. "If we can show the utilities this stuff works," says Riley, "it will take off on its own."

Today, grid-scale storage, solar energy and many other green technologies are too costly to compete without subsidies. That's why the stimulus launched the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E), a blue-sky fund inspired by the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the incubator for GPS and the M-16 rifle as well as the Internet. Located in an office building a block from the rest of the Energy Department, ARPA-E will finance energy research too risky for private funders, focusing on speculative technologies that might dramatically cut the cost of, say, carbon capture — or not. "We're taking chances, because that's how you put a man on the moon," says director Arun Majumdar, a materials scientist from the University of California, Berkeley. "Our idea is it's O.K. to fail. You think America's pioneers never failed?"

ARPA-E is funding the new pioneers — mad scientists and engineers with ideas for wind turbines based on jet engines, bacteria to convert carbon dioxide into gasoline, and tiny molten-metal batteries to
provide cheap high-voltage storage. That last idea is the brainchild of MIT’s Donald Sadoway, who already has a prototype fuel cell the size of a shot glass. The stimulus will help him create a kind of reverse aluminum smelter to make prototypes the size of a hockey puck and a pizza box. The ultimate goal is a commercial scale battery the size of a tractor trailer that could power an entire neighborhood.

“We need radical breakthroughs, so we need radical experiments,” Sadoway says. “These projects send chills down the spine of the carbon world. If a few of them work, [Venezuela's Hugo] Chávez and [Iran's Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad are out of power.”

Then again, the easiest way to blow up the energy world would be to stop wasting so much. That's the final link in the chain, a full-throttle push to make energy efficiency a national norm. The Recovery Act is weatherizing 250,000 homes this year. It gave homeowners rebates for energy-efficient appliances, much as the Cash for Clunkers program subsidized fuel-efficient cars. It's retrofitting juice-sucking server farms, factories and power plants; financing research into superefficient lighting, windows and machinery; and funneling billions into state and local efficiency efforts.

It will also retrofit 3 in 4 federal buildings. The U.S. government is the nation's largest energy consumer, so this will save big money while boosting demand for geothermal heat pumps, LED lighting and other energy-saving products. "We're so huge, we make markets," says Bob Peck, the General Services Administration's public-buildings commissioner. GSA's 93-year-old headquarters, now featuring clunky window air conditioners and wires duct-taped to ceilings, will get energy optimized heating, cooling and lighting systems, glass facades with solar membranes and a green roof; the makeover should cut its energy use 55%. It might even beta-test stimulus-funded windows that harvest sunlight. "We'll be the proving ground for innovation in the building industry," Peck says. "It all starts with renovating the government."

The New Venture Capitalists

The stimulus really is starting to change Washington — and not just the buildings. Every contract and lobbying contact is posted at Recovery.gov, with quarterly data detailing where the money went. A Recovery Board was created to scrutinize every dollar, with help from every major agency's independent watchdog. And Biden has promised state and local officials answers to all stimulus questions within 24 hours. It's a test-drive for a new approach to government: more transparent, more focused on results than compliance, not just bigger but better. Biden himself always saw the Recovery Act as a test — not only of the new Administration but of federal spending itself. He knew high-profile screwups could be fatal, stoking antigovernment anger about bureaucrats and two-car funerals. So he spends hours checking in, buttering up and banging heads to keep the stimulus on track, harassing Cabinet secretaries, governors and mayors about unspent broadband funds, weatherization delays and fishy projects. He has blocked some 260 skate parks, picnic tables and highway beautifications that flunked his what-would-your-mom-think test. "Imagine they could have proved we wasted a billion dollars," Biden says. "Gone, man. Gone!"

So far, despite furor over cash it supposedly funneled to contraception (deleted from the bill) and phantom congressional districts (simply typos), the earmark-free Recovery Act has produced surprisingly few scandals. Prosecutors are investigating a few fraud allegations, and critics have found some goofy expenditures, like $51,500 for water-safety-mascot costumes or a $50,000 arts grant to a kinky-film
house. But those are minor warts, given that unprecedented scrutiny. Biden knows it's early — "I ain't saying mission accomplished!" — but he calls waste and fraud "the dogs that haven't barked."

The Recovery Act's deeper reform has been its focus on intense competition for grants instead of everybody-wins formulas, forcing public officials to consider not only whether applicants have submitted the required traffic studies and small-business hiring plans but also whether their projects make sense. Already staffed by top technologists from MIT, Duke and Intel, ARPA-E recruited 4,500 outside experts to winnow 3,700 applications down to 37 first-round grants. "We've taken the best and brightest from the tech world and created a venture fund — except we're looking for returns for the country," Majumdar says. These change agents didn't uproot their lives to fill out forms in triplicate and shovel money by formula. They want to reinvent the economy, not just stimulate it. Sadoway, the MIT battery scientist, is tired of reporting how many jobs he's created in his lab: "If this works, I'll create a million jobs!"

Obama has spent most of his first term trying to clean up messes — in the Gulf of Mexico, Iraq and Afghanistan, on Wall Street and Main Street — but the details in the stimulus plan are his real down payment on change. The question is which changes will last. Will electric cars disappear after the subsidies disappear? Will advanced battery factories migrate back to China? Will bullet trains ever get built? The President wants to extend transformative programs like ARPA-E. But would they be substitutes for the status quo or just additions to tack onto the deficit? And would they survive a Republican Congress?

Polls suggest the actual contents of the Recovery Act are popular. But the idea of the stimulus itself remains toxic — and probably will as long as the recovery remains tepid. "Today, it's judged by jobs," Rogers says of the act. "But in 10 years, it'll be judged by whether it transformed our economy."

**The Recovery Act's Four Investment Goals**

1. Lower solar power's cost 50% by 2015, to put it on par with the retail cost of power from the existing grid

2. Cut the cost of batteries for electric vehicles 50% by 2013 and eventually reduce the sticker price of an electric car to match that of its gasoline-powered counterpart

3. Double the U.S.'s renewable-energy-generation capacity (wind, solar and geothermal) as well as its renewable-manufacturing capacity, by 2012

4. Lower the cost of sequencing an individual human genome to $1,000, enabling scientists to map 50 genomes for the same price as mapping just one today

**By the Numbers**

3,000

Number of homes supplied by a stimulus-supported photovoltaic power plant in Arcadia, Fla.

$20 BILLION

Amount Washington is investing in health-information technology like electronic health records
$4 BILLION
Amount being spent to make the power supply more reliable and efficient

18 MILLION
Number of new smart meters, which help control energy costs, that will be in use by 2013

30
Number of electric-vehicle-battery factories that will be online by 2012, vs. two in 2009


New Orleans 2005-2010
By TIM PADGETT Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

A jazz band parade gathers in mid-August
Mario Tama

Hurricane Katrina did more than smash New Orleans’ shoddy levees. It shattered faith in the government’s ability, if not its will, to rescue our most vulnerable citizens, and it broke the spirit of one of America's most exuberant cities.

We didn't realize how much we'd mourn New Orleans until Katrina’s rising, fetid waters turned it into a ghost town. There are just a few places in this hemisphere that embody the New World's elegantly unruly culture. Rio de Janeiro is one, New Orleans another. Its jazz, the jambalaya swirl of its cuisine and architecture—the Crescent City is our boisterous soul roaring from a wrought-iron balcony. But it took a tragedy as ugly as Katrina to really make us aware of the Big Easy's beauty.

Five years after a Category 3 storm crashed into the mouth of the Mississippi on Aug. 29, 2005, wrecking the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Florida and killing 1,800 people, New Orleans is regaining its swagger.
The Saints' inspiring Super Bowl victory in February helped, but there are more substantive gauges. The population, which scattered across the country in Katrina's wake, is back to almost 80% of its 2005 level. The city's $5 billion tourism industry blares like a Dixieland trumpet again. New Orleans recently regained investment-grade status on its debt as corruption-weary citizens demand more transparent government. A charter-school boom is raising dismal education standings. And the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers--which a federal judge upbraided last year for its negligent maintenance of the levees--is finishing a 350-mile (563 km) reconstruction of the walls that residents hope (warily) will finally accord them real flood protection.

Like mold on the walls of a shotgun house, New Orleans' post-Katrina problems are hard to scour. Restoration of the surrounding wetlands that buffer hurricane damage is delayed. The city's unemployment rate is about half the rest of the nation's, but its poverty rate, at 23%, is double. A quarter of its residential properties are blighted, and many of its house facades still bear the ominous X's that disaster officials painted on them after the storm. Only a fifth of the residents of the Lower Ninth Ward--the community hit hardest by the storm and after it by government indifference--have returned to live there. New Orleans still has the country's highest murder rate--and, as the recent indictments of cops for allegedly murdering civilians during Katrina remind us, its police force remains a blight itself.

Still, the strains of blues and the aroma of gumbo are wafting out of the French Quarter again. New Orleans' character turned out to be more resilient than its levees, and that's something for the rest of us to trumpet.
The Virginia National Guard's 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, readies for take off.

Yuri Kozyrev

No triumphant banner was unfurled on the bridge of an aircraft carrier as the last U.S. combat brigade departed Iraq, but the soldiers heading home could be forgiven their sense of exultation. They had accomplished their mission; it was not their fault that it had been redefined over and over again during the seven years and five months of combat operations. Whatever their political masters required of them, they unfailingly delivered. Smash Saddam's army? Check. Crush the Shi'ite Mahdi Army? Check. Wrest Fallujah from the Sunni insurgency — twice? Check and check. Make friends with the same insurgents to defeat al-Qaeda? Check. They weren't ordered to finish that job, however, and their pullout was greeted by the terrorists with celebratory carnage: bombings in at least 13 Iraqi cities on Aug 25.

Also incomplete were the many non-soldiering tasks assigned to the troops. They built schools and sewage systems, disbursed small-business loans and helped irrigate fields, drank bottomless cups of sweetened tea in order to build relationships with tribal elders and city politicians. But they were not given time to consolidate these gains; left unprotected, they may swiftly be lost.

There are other orders to be obeyed. Nearly 50,000 uniformed service personnel remain in Iraq to provide training and other services. They are not designated combat troops but are armed and ready to be deployed should combat become necessary. Not only does such a likelihood exist; its chances have multiplied in recent months as the numbers of suicide bombings and civilian deaths have again soared. The Aug. 25 bombings suggest al-Qaeda and its supporters have embarked on a surge of their own. Their murderous cause, unchecked by Iraq's feckless political elite — almost six months after a general election, there's still no government — will be empowered by the dwindling of the U.S. military presence.

There's ample reason to believe that the Iraqis will get it right in the end: theirs is a modern nation, rich in resources both human and material. But confidence that they will eventually conquer their demons and solve their problems is tempered by the suspicion that things may get much worse before they get better.
There was little celebration among Iraqis as the last U.S. combat brigade rumbled down the highway to Kuwait. Only a sense of exhausted resignation.

Going Home from Iraq

Camp Adder, August 2010

The First Battalion, 116th Infantry, a National Guard unit of 400 soldiers based in Lynchburg, Va., is slated to leave Iraq as part of the drawdown of U.S. forces that foresees a reduction of troop strength to 50,000 by Sept. 1, 2010. Above, the soldiers depart from a promotion ceremony at Camp Adder, a base 220 miles southeast of Baghdad.
Last Days
Shawn Brown, 22, a member of the 1-116th, walks through a vehicle graveyard near Camp Taji, in central Iraq.

Cover of Night
Soldiers from the unit gather before their last convoy escort mission to Baghdad.
Flagpole
A member of the 1-116th lowers the flag at Camp Adder. Home to 20,000 service members and contractors, Adder is one of the last U.S. bases scheduled to close in Iraq.

Receiving Guests
This Iraqi driver once worked with U.S. troops.
Congratulations

Soldiers with the 1-116th celebrate Matthew Moriarty's 20th birthday.

Perspective

Joshua Carl Johnson, 19, is the youngest soldier with the 1-116th. "There's still a lot of work to be done," he says.
Prayer

Soldiers with the 1-116th pray at Camp Adder. The unit, which was mobilized in January 2010 for a one-year tour, is one of the few entire battalions in Iraq to be affected by the curtailment.

Staging Area

Dozens of blast walls lie at Camp Adder. Much of the equipment that will leave Iraq is brought here, then taken to Kuwait, then to the U.S. or Afghanistan.
Packing
A soldier collects his belongings.

Duffles and Boxes
Soldiers from the 1-116th prepare their belongings for shipment.
Heavy Equipment
A line of humvees in a staging area at Camp Adder.

Hookah
Soldiers with the 1-116th share a smoke during downtime at Camp Adder.
Dance Party
A band performs for the soldiers at Camp Adder.

Soldier
Specialist Ricky Chittun, 24, is on his second tour of duty in Iraq.
Line
Soldiers with the 1-116th prepare to board a military aircraft to leave Iraq.

Homeward Bound
Soldiers of the 1-116th wait for the plane that will carry them back to the U.S. to take off.
Postcard from Dry Tortugas

By BRYAN WALSH Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

Greenpeace has taken on a two month expedition to study the oil spill.

Todd Warshaw

There seem to be two rules for a passenger on a Greenpeace ship: 1) If you take a beer from the refrigerator, always remember to log it on the drinks sheet. (And pay your bar tab before you leave the boat; otherwise, I believe they'll make you walk the plank.) 2) There is no such thing as a passenger on a Greenpeace ship. Everyone works on board, and chores start at 8 a.m. — which is how I recently came to find myself on the Arctic Sunrise's poop deck, sorting the glass recyclables from the organic trash. At first I was a bit annoyed. I'm a journalist, after all, not an assistant galley slave. But during the few days I spent sailing through the Dry Tortugas, a series of minuscule islands west of the Florida Keys, on board Greenpeace's Arctic Sunrise, I learned how the vessel's spirit of cooperation and conservation represents what it means to be truly green.

Greenpeace's navy is best known for its headline-generating protests. Think of the iconic Rainbow Warrior clashes with the French navy in the 1980s. But I joined the Arctic Sunrise, a former Norwegian icebreaker and one of three Greenpeace ships scattered around the world, in mid-August for the first phase of a scientific mission to the Gulf of Mexico. For the next two months, Greenpeace will provide transportation and support to rotating teams of scientists carrying out oil-spill-related studies, from assessments of plankton health near the spill site to surveys of marine mammals that may have been affected by the crude. Given the controversy unfolding over the true extent of the spill beneath the Gulf's surface — the government says much of the oil has disappeared, but independent scientists are skeptical — the voyage couldn't have been better timed. "This is about bearing witness to what's going on," says Paul Horsman, a former Greenpeace activist and now director for the TckTckTck campaign on climate change.

First up on our voyage were the Dry Tortugas, discovered by Juan Ponce de Leon in 1513 and named for their turtles (there were lots of them back then) and freshwater (there wasn't any). Marine scientists Charles Messing and Joe Lopez of Florida's Nova University were aboard to survey populations of sea sponges, ancient underwater animals that are plentiful in the relatively pristine coral reefs of the Tortugas. Because sponges filter huge amounts of water as they search for plankton, they can be a bellwether
species for marine health. "It's great to actually be able to see the habitat you're trying to protect," says Lopez.

The sponges were O.K. Thanks to advantageous ocean currents, the Tortugas, a protected marine area, were spared any oil from the spill. As the Arctic Sunrise sails closer to the spill site, though, that's less likely to be true, and in the Tortugas, there were earnest discussions of the sort you'd expect on board a Greenpeace ship about the need to get the U.S. off oil, to create a truly sustainable way of life. "This is the outcome of our addiction to fossil fuels," says Dan Howells, Greenpeace USA's deputy campaign director. "It's our job to make people understand that we really can change."

I've heard such sentiments many times in my years as TIME's environment writer. But my time aboard the Arctic Sunrise made those words resonate in a way I'd never experienced before. All waste on the ship that can be recycled is — not only because this is Greenpeace but also because when you're at sea, there's nowhere for waste to go. And a voyage that could have been chaotic worked because the boho, international crew comes together for a common purpose. "The spirit of Greenpeace is found on these ships," says Horsman.

If the world is ever to properly manage the multitude of crises it faces — population growth, resource depletion, global warming — we'll need to take a bit of that spirit onshore. It's easy to remember how vulnerable you are when you're encased in a cramped ship, knowing that you can rely only on what you've carried with you. But things aren't so different on Earth, sailing through a sea of stars. We work together to take care of our home — or we perish.
A Passion for Words

Thank you so much for the article on Jonathan Franzen by Lev Gross ... man [Aug. 23]. (I had torn so many pieces from the article, I had to patch it back together to see who the author was.) I have a new reading list to catch up on. One of my torn pieces, on Kierkegaard's concept of busyness--"that constant distraction ... from difficult realities"--will be my explanation for leaving Facebook.

Dale Brubeck, COLUMBUS, OHIO

John Irving's The World According to Garp--a sprawling, neo-Dickensian popular novel of exactly the kind that Grossman praises Franzen for writing--was the strongest novel of the 1970s and an inescapable book for Franzen's generation of readers and writers. That this great American novelist (and former TIME cover subject) goes unmentioned in your cover story--which details, in part, his legacy--is puzzling.

Gregory Knapp, CHICAGO

Franzen's reflections on the proper way to read--i.e., "seriously"--is condescending and diminishes the enjoyment of a very personal act. And given the near renaissance that reading is undergoing with the advent of e-books and increased library use, I found your article's negativity quite discordant with the times.

Hillary S. Kativa, NORRISTOWN, PA.

Pulitzer Prize--winning author Jane Smiley is arguably one of the best contemporary American novelists--if not the best. Yet she was not only passed over as a writer deserving of the cover of TIME but was also excluded even from the list of old, less-old and less-old-yet literary luminaries. What a reminder that the people who have defined and continue to define the canon of great American authors can be narrow in their outlook.

Faith Dornbrand, POTOMAC, MD.

An FDA Scandal

TIME's story on Avandia and the FDA unfairly misrepresents GlaxoSmithKline's efforts to understand Avandia's heart-safety profile [Aug. 23]. Avandia remains by far the most widely studied oral medicine for Type 2 diabetes introduced in the past 10 years. As FDA commissioner Margaret Hamburg noted in a letter to Congress this March, GSK itself took the initiative to study a potential link between Avandia and heart attack and other cardiovascular complications and submitted an analysis to the FDA back in 2005. Since then, additional trials and data analyses have been completed. FDA advisory committees in 2007 and again last month reviewed the extensive data, and although opinions varied widely each time, above
the din, clear voting majorities concluded that Avandia should remain available to patients under appropriate conditions.

Moncef Slaoui, Chairman, Research and Development, GlaxoSmithKline, PHILADELPHIA

Congratulations on the excellent investigative journalism on Avandia. The FDA certainly did not do its job. And GlaxoSmithKline should be prosecuted.

Richard Trench, SAN ANTONIO

You're the Top!

Kudos to Joel Stein for addressing the antielitism "cancer" ["Bring On the Elites!," Aug. 23]. I'm sure he'll be inundated with complaints by the very tweeting, reality-TV-obsessed misspellers he has denounced, but his article is right on. Our embrace of mediocrity as leadership is a toxin that needs to be expelled.

Stephen Ziemba, ROSWELL, GA.

In his effort to defend elitism, Stein has once again accomplished the opposite. Some of his good points lie buried beneath self-important fluff and an apparent obsession with brand-name institutions. If being "in a lot of ways better" means writing self-indulgent articles, I'll keep my diploma from the less prestigious college.

Andrew Kim, COLORADO SPRINGS

I'll Gladly Pay You Tuesday For a Burger on Sunday

Thanks for "Weekday Vegetarians" [Aug. 23]. I admire my vegan friends. Though I have taken steps to eat less meat, I still felt I wasn't doing enough. It is helpful to understand that my efforts are at least making some difference, and I appreciate being able to identify myself with a new term: flexitarian.

Mark Ferraro, NORTH HALEDON, N.J.

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Back to the Future

By RICHARD CORLISS  Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

Moviegoers like these in China flocked to Avatar, but many 3-D films fared poorly.

Chinfotopress / Getty Images

So it's come to this: The movie summer has been so blah, Hollywood needs the Na'vi to ride to the rescue.

Not that business is awful. The domestic box office, which in 2009 topped $10 billion for the first time, could reach $11 billion this year. The season's biggest hit, Toy Story 3, which made more than $400 million in U.S. theaters and nearly $1 billion worldwide, was certainly a treat, and Inception painted a most provocative dreamscape. But magnitude and surprise — attributes that give audiences the feeling they're attending an event, not just showing up out of habit — were mostly lacking in summer 2010. That leads to audience shrinkage. "The box-office gross is up 1%," says Jeff Bock, an analyst for Exhibitor Relations, "but the number everyone at the studios will be talking about is the 4% drop in attendance."

Re-enter James Cameron and his blue heroes. Avatar, which opened in December, earned $2.7 billion worldwide and became the top-grossing film of all time. Now Cameron has tweaked and stretched his eco-epic by nine minutes and is sending the new version into about 750 theaters in the 3-D and Imax 3-D formats. His aim, aside from making a few more bucks, is to give the movie's fans a deeper, longer trip. "It's all stuff that takes place out in the Pandoran landscape with the Na'vi or the Avatars," Cameron told Tim Lammers of Internet Broadcasting, "and it's all computer-generated stuff. There's a new hunt scene and creatures that you haven't seen before, and there's new flying."

The same but somehow new! That's been Hollywood's mantra for success ever since it discovered movie stars. This summer, though, the offerings mostly seemed the same but old. Four of the season's five top-grossing movies were "further adventures of ..": a sequel (Iron Man 2), two threequels (Toy Story 3, The Twilight Saga: Eclipse) and a fourquel (Shrek Forever After). Christopher Nolan's Inception was made from his own script, but even that movie's originality is up for debate. (In a 2004 Scrooge McDuck comic, Huey, Dewey and Louie use a small machine to tap into Scrooge's dreams and find the combination to his vault. Probably just a coincidence.)
Moviewise, it's been kind of a bummer summer. Last year had breakout hits like District 9, The Hangover and the Quentin Tarantino fantasy Inglourious Basterds, and Sandra Bullock relocated her star mojo in The Proposal. And next summer, as Bock notes, is “like Hollywood’s Greatest Hits: the final Harry Potter film, Green Lantern, Pirates of the Caribbean 4, Transformers 3, Hangover 2, Cowboys vs. Aliens, J.J. Abrams’ Super 8. It should be a great summer to be a moviegoer — and to run a studio.” Here are the lessons from this summer that Hollywood can take to heart.

The Kids Are All Right
Of the season's top 10 grossers, five — Toy Story 3, Shrek Forever After, Despicable Me, The Karate Kid and The Last Airbender — are movies that children took their parents to. Hollywood's must-have demographic is down from 13-to-24 to about 8; the ideal rating du jour is down from PG-13 to PG. The Last Airbender, a live-action farrago inspired by an animated TV series, wasn't really a hit, costing more to produce ($150 million) than it has earned in U.S. theaters ($130 million). But it fared better domestically than producer Jerry Bruckheimer's very pricey pair of kid-friendly adventures, Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time ($90.4 million) and The Sorcerer's Apprentice ($60.6 million).

Stars Can Fade, Stars Can Shine
Adam Sandler, who flopped going serious with Funny People, returned to clown form with Grown Ups, which pleased no one but his vast fan base and has earned nearly $160 million, close to his all-time best, Big Daddy. Will Ferrell escaped from the prehistoric slapstick of Land of the Lost to join Mark Wahlberg in the cop-buddy comedy The Other Guys, which could reach $125 million. Thirteen years after he was the doomed Irishman on Cameron's Titanic, Leonardo DiCaprio has shown he can draw crowds to gnarly intellectual thrillers: Inception ($262 million at home, $619.5 million worldwide) and, earlier this year, Shutter Island ($128 million in the U.S., $294.8 million total). Other veteran stars had uneven rides: Tom Cruise's Knight & Day and Russell Crowe's Robin Hood found most of their audience abroad, although Sylvester Stallone lured action fans with his over-the-hill-gang caper The Expendables. Julia Roberts, meanwhile, received a muted welcome back in Eat Pray Love. And with Sex and the City 2 a box-office bust, the only female star of a top-10 summer movie was Angelina Jolie, whose thriller Salt was aimed squarely at men.

What Ever Happened to 3-D?
The success of 3-D animated features like Monsters vs. Aliens showed that people would pay more for a 3-D kick. Avatar seemed to certify the format's future: from now on, every big film would be in 3-D. For now, though, audiences have tired of ponying up a $4 surcharge for a movie that isn’t worth seeing in any D. Three recent 3-D films (Cats & Dogs: The Return of Kitty Galore, Step Up 3D and Piranha 3D) tanked, diminishing the format's éclat and inevitability. Some directors remain skeptical of the process; Nolan has said he'll make his next Batman saga in plain old 2-D. But Hollywood is built on dreams, not just the Inception kind, and the December release TRON: Legacy may make 3-D the next big thing again. Cameron, who has said he plans to release a 3-D version of Titanic in 2012, envisions a day when the process will be as universally accepted as color. It may be years before the industry is sure whether 3-D will fly like a Pandoran banshee or crash into the iceberg of moviegoers’ rejection.
Watching the Detective
By PICO IYER  Monday, Aug. 23, 2010

On closer inspection Swedish actor Warner Oland poses as Charlie Chan in 1937

EVERETT COLLECTION

Chang Apana walked the mean streets of Honolulu dressed in a Panama hat and brandishing a 5-ft. (1.5 m) bullwhip he'd designed himself. Though barely 5 ft. tall, the former cowboy patrolled such Chinatown areas as Blood Town and Hell's Half Acre for years, even as he was slashed at by fugitive lepers and thrown out of windows by drug fiends. In one celebrated case, he arrested 44 gamblers single-handedly, without firing a shot.

It has long been assumed that Earl D. Biggers had heard of the real-life Chang detective in Honolulu called Charlie Chan; yet it is the achievement of Yunte Huang, in his irrepressibly spirited and entertaining Charlie Chan, to suggest that life imitated art as much as the other way around. The star of six books, 47 movies, comic strips, a board game and a 1970s animation series, Chan is, for Huang, "as American as Jack Kerouac" precisely because of his theatrical implausibility and his mixed-up origins.

A virtuoso of curiosity, Huang shows how life is more complex and interesting than racial stereotyping or academic theory would suggest. Hollywood's most famous Chinese gentleman was, after all, played by two Japanese actors and a Korean actor before Warner Oland, a Swede, took over the part. Yet far from resenting this, audiences in China, as Huang points out, were grateful to have a likable hero in Hollywood — Chan was the counter — Fu Manchu — and studios in Shanghai and Hong Kong soon began cranking out their own Chan films. When Oland went to Shanghai in 1936, answering media questions in mock-Chan pidgin, he was greeted as a hero.

While outlining this history, Huang digs up fascinating research on everything from the demographics of capital punishment in Honolulu to the origins of The Manchurian Candidate. And who knew that the first recorded American use of Chinaman, according to the OED, came from Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1854?
Or that Thomas Edison made two short films in the 1890s called *Chinese Laundry Scene* and *Dancing Chinamen-Marionettes*?

Even tastier are the glimpses Huang offers of his own story. After taking part in the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations as a Peking University student, he left for America where he ended up in Tuscaloosa, Ala., working as a dishwasher, delivery boy, waiter and co-owner of a fast-food restaurant. Somehow the immigrant who had learned English at 11 by listening to a radio in his village became a teacher at Harvard and Santa Barbara (where he is a professor of English today).

Huang's style is as eccentric as his subject. A writer facing a deadline becomes "as desperate as an ant in a hot wok." Chinese men grin "like josses [gods] in a temple." Yet the very pulpiness of the prose is, of course, part of Huang's point in showing how China can still remake America as much as the other way round. And when you read of the Harvard-educated Biggers writing books "with moonlight streaming in through the casement ... and a bag of peanut brittle at his elbow," you realize that *Charlie Chan* is that rarest of treats: a work of exhaustively researched popular history that reads like a dime-store romance.

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**Detroit 1-8-7: TV Looks at a Trouble City**

By JAMES PONIEWOZIK Saturday, Aug. 28, 2010

Growing up near Detroit in the '70s and '80s, I was jealous of other cities that had their own TV shows. New York City, L.A., Boston, Chicago — even Milwaukee had both *Happy Days* and *Laverne and Shirley*. (Milwaukee!) Eventually, Detroit got a few sitcoms (*Martin, Home Improvement*), but no series ever really explored the dramatic possibilities of this sprawling Rust Belt city.

Cut to the first scene of *Detroit 1-8-7*, which makes its debut on ABC Sept. 21. A policewoman shows us the homicide-division whiteboard, too small to accommodate the growing list of murders. "We may be the last assembly line left in Detroit," she says. Later, a homicide cop is searching for a spent bullet on a roadside and finds it — after sorting through a slew of other bullets.
It's not exactly a tourism brochure. Some locals say Hollywood is giving the city a Gucci-shod kick while it's down: 24% unemployment, a hobbed auto industry and now this? ABC didn't help matters by shooting the pilot in Atlanta or by making a promo that erroneously gave Detroit the highest murder rate in the U.S. (It comes in fourth.) City councilman Kwame Kenyatta sponsored a resolution asking ABC to change the show's title, which he says equates the city with murder. (187 is police code and slang for homicide.) The resolution failed. But the question remains: Does a show set in a troubled city have a responsibility beyond the ratings?

Detroit 1-8-7's producers say yes. Beyond the economic benefit — the show moved production to Detroit, adding an estimated $25 million to city coffers for the season — executive producer David Zabel says he wants to treat the Motor City as a character. "We have a burden," he says, "because we're the only ongoing series that's paying attention to Detroit." Among the subjects Zabel plans to cover are architectural preservation, community-improvement programs and the urban-farming movement (in which the city's abandoned land is being reclaimed for agriculture).

All potentially interesting stories. But they're told through the frame of Detroiters getting killed, over and over.

Now, murder in an American city is not exactly a new subject for TV. A Law & Order producer once estimated that more Manhattanites died on the franchise's three shows than do in real life. CSI kills people gruesomely in Miami and Las Vegas every week. But those cities have associations beyond violence: the beach, the Strip, Wall Street. Detroit has cars and Motown, mainly glories of the past.

It's not the responsibility of any fiction to idealize its subject or buck it up. Most critics (this one included) would call HBO's The Wire the best cop show ever made, and while creator David Simon wrote it with love for his native city, Baltimore, it was tough love. The Wire chronicled gang violence and corruption, humanizing cops and criminals alike in a complex picture of the city's social troubles. Pols didn't always love it, but it was as rich a tapestry as a Victorian novel. (For the record, neither Zabel nor Detroit 1-8-7 creator Jason Richman are native Detroiter.)

Detroit, like Baltimore, has troubles that need more attention, not less. Indeed, the least convincing argument against Detroit 1-8-7 is that it should pick on a city with less crime. Do we want to encourage cop shows to be even less realistic?

A crime drama in a troubled city is not obligated to be sunny and positive. But it is obligated to be good. New York City can survive another lousy, boring procedural — God knows there will be another dozen, and 15 Manhattan sitcoms besides. Judging by the pilot (currently being reshot), Detroit 1-8-7 does not look bad. It's more character-focused than a typical procedural and has a strong, multiethnic cast (including The Sopranos' Michael Imperioli). And it has a sense of the city's history: an African-American cop, referencing the city's white-flight past, says he's been on the force so long that "when I started, half of the suspects were white."

But it also faces limits. A pay-cable show like The Wire or Simon's Treme, set in New Orleans, is able to challenge fans because it can survive with a tiny audience. Detroit 1-8-7 needs millions more viewers, which means pressure to stick to easy-to-follow, CSI-like plots. Such shows have little time to flesh out
civilian characters, who end up as flatly drawn villains and victims. (It's an issue made especially tricky by Detroit's racial divide: black-and-white storytelling has literally black-and-white overtones in a largely African-American city.) Still, shows like *NYPD Blue* have told character-rich, morally complex stories under big-network constraints.

Detroit is a fantastic subject for drama because of its people, its history and, yes, its problems. As a critic, I'll be watching *Detroit 1-8-7* with professional interest. As a native Michigander, I'll be hoping that it gets good and that Detroit gets lucky.

Q&A: Jessica Alba

By BRYAN ALEXANDER Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

Jessica Alba

Andrew H.Walker/GETTY IMAGES

Jessica Alba expands her action repertoire, playing the hottest immigration agent to ever flash a badge in Robert Rodriguez's slash-'em-up *Machete*. Time spoke to Alba about her Mexican heritage and her killer shoes.

**You take out a guy with a stiletto heel in *Machete*. Was that your first shoe kill?**
I believe I did something with shoes in *Dark Angel*, but not like this. In real life I've definitely killed bugs with shoes, for sure.
Which designer makes the best weapon?
I think I had Pradas in the movie. They were pretty good. Louboutins are good. They're both spiky. Maybe Gucci.

Killer shoe fight: you vs. Lady Gaga. Who takes it?
She can dance way better than me. But in a fight sequence I might take her. She has big heels, but I might be able to move faster.

What's your death total?
In my movies? Or in my life?

Let's start with real life, how many bodies out there are your responsibility?
In real-life, I'm zero for zero. But in my actor life, I've taken down a few people. In this movie, I had my moment with Machete (Danny Trejo) after we were in bed together. But I probably killed the least amount of people in the film.

Did you lobby Robert Rodriguez for more killing time?
It wasn't about the killing. I just wanted to do some action.

And how's the mustache?
What do you mean? I was just like, Do I have a mustache right now? I thought I took care of that.

No, Danny Trejo's mustache. You kiss him.
I guess it tickled, I didn't pay that much attention to it. Actually, it itches.

You were really tapping into the Mexican-American part of your ancestry in this movie.
My mother is French and Danish, my father is Mexican-American. That's the culture I identify with the most. My comfort food at home isn't biscuits and gravy. It's enchiladas and tacos.

If the Arizona immigration law is enforced, would you avoid the state?
I would advise my family against driving through Arizona. And my husband, who is African American and white but looks Latino.

You hit the tequila in Machete. How are your drunk acting skills?
It's always a little weird, because when I'm drunk, I never act drunk. I just say things I probably shouldn't say. But my character drunk is funny because she's straight-laced and I assume she doesn't drink a lot of tequila.

Have you ever considered a career in law enforcement?
No, but it was fun to play a person of the law. It's bizarre, I've always kind of been scared of cops. But I did have fun having a gun. And a holster and a badge. And sirens.

For a cop you squealed a lot in your shoot-out scene.
That was my idea. I was sincerely in the moment. If people are shooting at your head and blasting into your house when you're dead asleep, what do you do?
The film promises not only a second Machete but a third as well. Have you already signed on? I think it's assumed. When you are in one Robert Rodriguez movie and he asks you again, you jump.

**Will you be packing new shoe-weapons?**
A girl has got to come prepared.

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**The Short List of Things to Do**

**WEEK OF AUGUST 27**

**The Best of Soul Train**

*Now on DVD*

The music on these three discs of Don Cornelius' "hippest trip in America" is glorious. James Brown, Aretha Franklin and the Jackson 5 tear the roof off. But it's just as much fun to watch the visual evolution of '70s soul: The bell-bottom pantsuits! The dance lines! The hair-product ads!
**Mockingjay**

Now in stores

In this final installment of the dystopian *Hunger Games* trilogy, rebel forces wage war on the Capitol, a romantic saga takes a new twist, and tragedy strikes. Once again, Suzanne Collins writes young-adult fiction as if jet-propelled. You'll read at roughly the same pace.

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**Mesrine**

Now in theaters

Vincent Cassel, the great surly punk of Euro cinema, stars as notorious thief and killer Jacques Mesrine in Jean-François Richet's zazzy two-part bio-epic (subtitled *Killer Instinct* and *Public Enemy No. 1*, respectively). As busy and brutal as an armed robbery.
**All Delighted People**

Sufjan Stevens has been listening to Simon and Garfunkel, and it shows. The Brooklyn songwriter's latest release is an eight-song EP layered with finger-picked banjos, orchestral arrangements and multivoiced choruses that give it a somber, almost hallowed tone.

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**The Red Riding Trilogy**

"This is the North, where we do what we want!" This grim, must-see thriller, made as three feature films for British TV, worms inside a corruption pandemic among Yorkshire cops and businessmen with accents so thick, you'll be grateful for the DVD's subtitles.
Where others see a city map, Ryan Long sees a game board. The game is Foursquare, but not the way you played it in grade school. On Foursquare.com every bar, every restaurant, every office building is another space to be conquered: check in on the site enough times from a particular location and you're proclaimed mayor of that place. Long, 33, an insurance-settlement consultant in Overland Park, Kans., has already earned one of Foursquare's coveted Supermayor badges by becoming the mayor of 10 locations simultaneously. "It started as me wondering what the heck this [site] is, but now it's budded into an everyday thing and more of an addiction," Long says.

Social media has lit out for the territory. Since Foursquare launched in March 2009, some 2.5 million people have started playing. That's still small compared with other social-media sites, but the eagerness of Foursquare's users to broadcast their whereabouts has not gone unnoticed by the heavyweights. On Aug. 18, Facebook (500 million users) rolled out a feature that lets users attach a location to their status updates, and Twitter (somewhere north of 200 million users) in March began letting people include a place as part of their tweets.

What's driving the location craze? Social-media magnates still need to come up with ways to monetize their sites, which are free to users. Foursquare was one of the first companies to bet that users would be willing to share their location in exchange for discounts at the places they're checking in from. Foursquare is currently willing to serve up local businesses' coupons for free, but it's something that could prove a lucrative revenue model as the site grows. This pilot program has taken off, expanding from a handful of stores to more than 15,000, including big brands like Starbucks and Pizza Hut. "We're seeing these crazy scenarios where the check-ins at Starbucks are increasing by a little more than 50%," says founder Dennis Crowley. All that for $1 off a Frappucino.

Foursquare rewards users in nonmonetary ways as well. Check in 10 times a month at your health club and you'll get a Gym Rat badge. Check in four late nights in a row and you'll get a Bender badge. For help in earning a Supermayor badge, there's an iPhone app dubbed Mayorama that points out mayorless locations nearby. But a warning to those looking to land-grab: in February, Foursquare added code to
prevent users from earning badges by checking in from far-flung locations without leaving the comfort of their couch.

Although check-in has managed to replace tweet as the Internet buzzword du jour, both Foursquare and Twitter want to downplay the act itself. "The check-in is really only the beginning of the story," says Crowley, a serial entrepreneur whose precursor to Foursquare, a site called Dodgeball, was purchased by Google in 2005. The ultimate aim of geocentric sites is less to pinpoint your location than to offer guidance on what experiences you should seek out (or avoid) there. Foursquare already does this a bit, accumulating tips and suggestions from users at each location, such as "Nice public restroom here" or "Crappy customer service there." Meanwhile, the site's closest rival, Gowalla, has captured nearly 400,000 users by becoming a constantly updated travel guide, letting users share photos and even create customized trips for future travelers who follow in their footsteps.

"We're thinking about how we can provide value beyond just the check-in itself," says Gowalla co-founder Josh Williams. "Sharing photographs, telling stories about a given location or whether someone's had a romantic date there — that's where things get interesting."

Maybe. Maybe not. I'm a big fan of social media, and I've tried off and on this year to force myself into the habit of updating my whereabouts, but I can't get into it. Part of this is just that my life isn't all that exciting; if there were a Staying In or a Netflixing Alone badge, I would have earned it long ago. But part of it is that I don't see the benefits yet. It's a bit too much like having a pint-size version of my mother in my pocket, constantly prodding me for updates. Where are you going? Who are you with? How late were you out?

All this disclosure carries with it some security concerns too. In February a small team of developers launched a site called PleaseRobMe.com highlighting the stupidity of users who link their every movement on Foursquare to their publicly available Twitter profiles, essentially broadcasting their comings and goings for anyone to see. That site was taken down after the founders said their point had been made. But other security hounds have since started ICanStalkU.com which shows how people can be tracked down on the basis of location data attached (sometimes unwittingly) to photos posted on Twitter that were taken with smart phones.

Both Crowley and Williams point out that there's no way for either Foursquare or Gowalla to know your whereabouts unless you share it by checking in. But if you're foolish enough to input your home address so you can be the mayor of your bathroom, your info becomes part of Foursquare's publicly available directory of places, despite the fact that location services recommend against domicile check-ins.

Although Foursquare includes an option called Off the Grid that lets you earn frequent-user perks without disclosing your movements to fellow members, the site is hoping — particularly now that Facebook and Twitter have entered the location game — that more users will get comfortable with the idea of sharing their whereabouts. "There's a certain level of paranoia out there," says Supermayor Long, who notes that he curates his Foursquare friends carefully and understands that location sharing carries some risk of getting stalked or robbed. "But until it happens to me, I'm not worried."
Training Pastors, Rabbis, and Imams Together

By ELIZABETH DIAS  Sunday, Aug. 22, 2010

Najeeba Syeed-Miller, Assistant Professor of Interreligious Education, announces the launch of a project at the Claremont School of Theology that will integrate the education of ministers, rabbis and Muslim religious leaders.

Adam Lau / AP

When Jerry Campbell became president of California's renowned Claremont School of Theology four years ago, low enrollment and in-the-red books threatened to close the 125-year-old institution. But since Claremont is the only United Methodist seminary west of Denver, Campbell resolved to find a way to stay open.

Drawing from classic American entrepreneurial wisdom — when faced with extinction, innovate — and a commitment to engage today's multi-faith culture, this fall Claremont will commence a first on U.S. soil: a "theological university" to train future pastors, imams, and rabbis under one roof. The experiment to end isolated clerical training brings together Claremont, the Islamic Center of Southern California (ICSC) and the Academy for Jewish Religion California. The hope of officials at all three organizations is that when leaders study their own religious traditions together alongside friends of other faiths, they will develop the respect and wisdom necessary to transform America's fractured religious outlook.

The project hatched naturally from Claremont's desire to engage southern California's religiously diverse population. "We're trying to catch up with the practical reality of how congregations, synagogues, and mosques are already trying to create some rapport among themselves," says Campbell. Not only will the project offer comprehensive multi-faith classes, but also it hopes to establish the first accredited imam-training institution in the U.S.

Only recently has the American Muslim population had the finances and the student pipeline to try to launch its own higher education institution; today's imams have trained either overseas or in community-based but unaccredited mosque programs. In addition to Claremont's efforts, Connecticut's
Hartford Seminary is seeking accreditation for a new imam-training program, and Zaytuna College, a new, unaccredited Islamic liberal arts school in Berkeley, Calif., hopes to eventually include clerical classes.

The Claremont project, which so far has helped the school boost enrollment for this coming year by nearly 10% compared to last year, is part of a broader trend in American theological education as schools face an increasingly pluralist society. While none go as far as Claremont will to broadly train non-Christian clerics, other big-name Protestant programs have added world religion classes as well as partnerships with Jewish and Muslim programs. Hartford Seminary is known for its specialty in Christian-Muslim studies, and Harvard Divinity School requires in-depth study of at least two religious traditions.

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) begins formal discussions this fall to explore how pluralism might change pastoral education. "I think that we are on the cusp of a lot of change, but we are at the front end of it, so it's not clear which of these are going to be the survivors, what new models might in fact emerge," says Daniel Aleshire, executive director of ATS. "In 20 years, the whole theological training landscape could be quite different." Already two other theological schools — Boston's Andover Newton and Chicago's Meadville Lombard — have followed Claremont's lead and in June announced plans to form similar interfaith consortiums.

Claremont's greatest contributions, however, may extend beyond the Christian community. An American imam-training program has long been "a dream" for Muslims, says Imam Mohamed Magid, vice president of the Islamic Society of North America. Not only has the supply chain for imams in the U.S. suffered since 9/11 largely due to immigration and visa issues, but also he points out, "In order for second-generation Muslims to have Islam be relevant to their life, they have to have an imam who understands American culture." The partnership with Claremont will allow the ICSC to realize its 20-year vision for an Academy of Islamic Thought, a program that can now become the new imam-training school.

To be sure, Claremont's push to desegregate religious education has encountered its share of roadblocks. The most notable to date occurred in January when questions about Claremont's commitment to Christian education nearly cost the school its funding and sanction from the United Methodist Church. After a five-month investigation, Campbell prevailed. "We explained clearly to the [Methodist] review team that in fact our United Methodist character continues intact throughout this program," he said. "We intend to be the Christian partner in this endeavor, and so we are not changing our United Methodist character essentially in any way."

Additional hurdles lie ahead. The Claremont project has to gain an endorsement for the new Islamic Center from Egypt's famed Al-Azhar University, the world's leading Sunni institution whose word gives weight to Muslim programs worldwide. And because Claremont still needs to find Buddhist and Hindu partners, hire up to 25 new professors, and raise an additional $104 million to pay for endowed faculty chairs and facility expansion, Campbell estimated that it will be nearly 10 years before the multi-faith project is in full swing.

In the meantime, the outlook for this interfaith model appears positive if cautious. When the project was announced, a group of more conservative Claremont students considered leaving, but no Claremont
professor has resigned and only one Academy for Jewish Religion faculty has taken a leave of absence in response to the new joint initiative. Claremont Christian History Professor Esther Chung-Kim acknowledges that from a historian's perspective, Claremont is going out on a limb. But, as she says, "If we don't try it, who will?" Long-term enrollment will determine the venture's sustainability. "I'm willing to push ahead and see what happens," Chung-Kim says. It will be up to America now to prove Claremont's hypothesis.

POWER OF ONE

Power of One

By Nilanjana Bhowmick

Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

Using dance as psychotherapy, Sohini Chakraborty is helping former child prostitutes regain their sense of self.

Daniel Pepper for TIME

In 1996, Sohini Chakraborty was walking in Kolkata when she came across a wrenching poster: a photo of a child prostitute staring listlessly at the camera, with the caption "I am no more bride-to-be, no more mother-to-be, no more future-to-be." The poster, which was outside the office of a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), was part of an antitrafficking campaign in India, where about 1.2 million children are believed to be involved in prostitution.

Chakraborty, who six years earlier had used her passion for dance to help cope with the loss of her mother to cancer, returned to the NGO the next day and pitched her idea of using dance as a psychotherapy tool for victims of trafficking and violence. The then 22-year-old started visiting Kolkata's women's shelters and red-light districts, talking to girls about what movements made them happy, excited or angry--moves, in other words, that could aid the abused in expressing themselves. "They explore what's inside you and help in bringing it out," says Chakraborty.
After honing her techniques, in 2004, Chakraborty started Kolkata Sanved (sanved is the Sanskrit word for empathy), a group of therapists who conduct dance classes in women's shelters. So far, the nonprofit has directly assisted some 5,000 women, including 2,500 former child prostitutes, through dance therapy.

One of Sanved's toughest cases: a 16-year-old trafficking survivor who was so traumatized that when staff members tried to connect with her, she refused to talk or even move. At many points, Chakraborty worried they were going to fail the girl. But after three years of extensive therapy, the teenager has become a gregarious chatterbox and has a job in Sanved's audiovisual department.

Sanved has also trained 11 women who live in shelters to become dance-therapy instructors. "My fight is not just to teach people to dance," she says, "but to make them blossom into strong individuals and live in society with dignity and self-respect."
Dr. John

Lisa Houlgrave

I feel like things still aren't right around New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina. Do you think the city will ever be the same? —Christopher Gustin, ARABI, LA.
Considering that over half the population is not back, I don't see how it could ever be [the same]. The Ninth Ward is still destroyed. People have nowhere to come home to. They got burned by the insurance companies. They got burned by everybody.

Do you think the people of Louisiana are in better shape now than they were in 2005? —Jose Mejia, BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS
No. All of the dispersants, all of the poisons that have been put in the Gulf are killing every critter that walks, flies, swims. All of the poor fishermen out there that for generations have earned their livelihood fishing are being wiped out.

What is the one thing New Orleans needs the most post-Katrina and post-BP? —Terri Fallin, NEVADA, MO.
One of the things it needs most desperately is leadership. We've never had any. This is a pathetic thing to say about my home. We're good people, but I feel like oil companies own our politicians outright.

What is it about New Orleans that so inspires musicians? —Waheed Akberzie, SIMI VALLEY, CALIF.
We have a culture, for one thing. I think we're the only state in the U.S. that actually has its own culture. It overlaps into the food, into the music, into the lifestyle of our people. We live on sacred lands that are being terribly abused.

How have the spirits and ancestors of New Orleans music influenced you? —Eoghan Ballard, PHILADELPHIA
I pray to them all the time, all of my musical ancestors, from Jelly Roll Morton to Buddy Bolden to Louis Armstrong. I'm proud I grew up in his neighborhood, the Third Ward. My father used to say, "That's where
Louis Armstrong was born.” He never called him Louie. He never called him Satchmo. “That's where Louis was born.”

**How would you describe your own music?** —Denis Murrell, MACAU
I like to think of what Duke Ellington said about music: There’s only two kinds of music — good and bad. I would like to think my music is good. I try to make music that tells truths.

**What musicians would you most like to collaborate with?** —Dave Krolak, BASKING RIDGE, N.J.
That's an unanswerable question for a guy like me. It's not like I listen to people's music and say, "I like that. We'll write great songs together!" People who can write fast — bing, bang, boom — that's the kind of people I like to write with. I don't think I could ever write a song with Randy Newman. He takes forever to write a song and finesses it to the point where it's wonderful. That's not how I like to do it. I can write two, three, four songs in a day.

**You used to be a guitar player but switched to piano. Why?** —Keith Watling, MILWAUKEE
One day I walked in on Ronnie Barron — he was a kid singing with our band — and this guy was pistol-whipping him. Now, his mother said that if anything happened to him on the road, she was going to take her meat cleaver and cut my cojones off. So I went and tried to get the gun out of the guy's hand. I got shot in my finger. It was sewed back on, but it messed up part of my head where I thought, Oh, I can't play the guitar anymore. I still play it a little bit, but not the way I used to.

**What do you think of the HBO series Treme?** —Jay Combe, NEW ORLEANS
I don't watch television. I don't own a television. I don't want one. But I saw the premiere, and the guy who plays the teacher — oh, God, I can't even tell you his name [Eds.: John Goodman] — he danced with my mother at her 90th-birthday party. His character on the show talks truth, about why we're constantly treated like a third-world country down here in Louisiana.

**Is there any other city in the world that you could live in?** —Trey Comeaux, NEW ORLEANS
No. I love my roots and my heritage. I've tried living in other places — I lived in New York City once. But New Orleans is where my heart is.
The message from the depths was brief, but few epics have begun with such drama. "Estamos bien en el refugio los 33" ("All 33 of us in the shelter are O.K."). On Aug. 5, 33 men were working the San José gold and copper mine in northern Chile when its roof collapsed. Two weeks would pass before rescuers drilled into a spot 2,300 ft. (701 m) below the surface, where it was hoped the men had found the 500-sq.-ft. (46 sq m) space designated as a refuge in case of disaster. They were there, crammed in but alive, disciplined by exigency to subsist on tiny rations of tuna, biscuits and sips of milk. The world marveled, but the emotions were overwhelming in their own country. Copper miners, the saying goes, pay many a salary in Chile, which has the greatest reserves of the metal on the planet. Yet the epic has only begun. It may take four months of delicately calculated drilling before the men can be rescued. In the meantime, they must be fed and supplied and counseled in their underground prison. Will bodies buckle? Will sanity hold? Will all of the 33 emerge, like Dante from the inferno, once again to see sky and stars?

Peace Talks to Resume

The leaders of Israel and the Palestinian territories last held direct negotiations close to two years ago. But following intense U.S. pressure, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas agreed on Aug. 20 to revive the stalled peace process. However, Abbas said he will back out of the U.S.-brokered talks, which begin Sept. 2, if Israel lets its 10-month freeze on West Bank settlement construction expire on Sept. 26. Many claim the settlements threaten the future viability of a Palestinian state.

A TIMELINE OF TALKS

Many rounds, few results

1990

1993
After decades of conflict, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization sign the Oslo accords, officially recognizing each other for the first time.

1998

The Wye River summit aims to keep Oslo alive in the face of Hamas attacks and after the murder of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by Israeli far-right zealots.

2000

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak arrive at Camp David to discuss "final status" issues, including refugees, borders and security. Arafat ultimately refuses to sign, and mass violence breaks out within weeks.

2000

The Sharm el-Sheikh conference in Egypt meets in hopes of resuming talks.

2001

Months later, at the Taba summit, Israeli and Palestinian representatives come excruciatingly close to an agreement but are thwarted by an upcoming Israeli election.

2002

The Quartet--the U.S., E.U., U.N. and Russia--proposes a road map suggesting how a final settlement might be reached.

2003

The Red Sea summit in Jordan attempts to get the road map on track, but little is accomplished.

2005

In Egypt, regional leaders meet to end a Palestinian uprising, but violence continues.

2010

2 | Somalia

Al-Shabab Takes Aim

After threatening violence following the African Union's July announcement that it would send additional peacekeepers to Somalia, Islamist extremist group al-Shabab launched an attack on a Mogadishu hotel Aug. 24, killing at least 30 people, including several members of parliament. Firefights with security
forces left a further six people dead, deepening concerns over the embattled Somali government's ability to rule.

3 | North Korea

President Carter Visits Pyongyang

Former President Jimmy Carter landed in North Korea on Aug. 25 on a private mission to broker the release of 31-year-old American prisoner Aijalon Mahli Gomes, who was arrested in January and sentenced to eight years of hard labor after he illegally entered the country. Carter, who helped defuse a nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula during a 1994 visit to Pyongyang, was expected to return with Gomes within days of his arrival.

4 | Washington

Race to the Top Grants Awarded

Nine states and D.C. were chosen as winners in the second round of the Obama Administration's Race to the Top education-reform program. They will receive money from a $4.35 billion fund created by the federal stimulus to reward states that implement reforms, such as merit-based teacher pay and charter schools, aimed at closing the achievement gap.

5 | Japan

A Deadly Look

Japan recently announced that it would open the Tokyo Detention Center's execution chambers to its national media for the first time ever. Justice Minister Keiko Chiba, an opponent of capital punishment, made the decision shortly after she witnessed two hangings in July. Japan, which has more than 100 people on death row, is the only G-8 country besides the U.S. to retain the death penalty.

6 | The Philippines

UNDER SIEGE

After a daylong standoff, police in Manila shot dead Rolando Mendoza, a former officer who had taken hostage a busful of passengers. Mendoza, who was fired last year in an alleged extortion scandal, was brought down only after eight tourists from Hong Kong were killed. Critics pilloried the police force, which they say was ill-trained to respond to such a crisis. President Benigno Aquino III pledged to hold a "thorough investigation."

7 | Congo

Hundreds Raped in Rebel Raid
In the country that has the sad distinction of being the "rape capital of the world," nearly 200 women, girls and baby boys were systematically raped over four days beginning July 30 in eastern Congo, according to the U.N. An ethnic-Hutu rebel gang whose leaders are linked to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda was blamed for the attacks. Aid groups report many women were assaulted by two to six men, often in front of their families.

8 | Germany

Restructuring the Military

On Aug. 23, the German Defense Ministry unveiled several proposals to reform the country's armed forces, known as the Bundeswehr. The Ministry's preferred plan advises cutting troop levels from some 250,000 to about 165,000 and halting a policy of conscription. However, critics, including many in the government, see compulsory service as integral to the country's values.

Military conscripts, in thousands

THE FUTURE OF THE DRAFT?

SOURCE: BUNDESWEHR

9 | Yemen

A War on Many Fronts

As Washington prepares to increase the use of targeted drone strikes against suspected terrorists in Yemen, that country's security forces laid siege to a town believed to be in the grip of al-Qaeda-linked militants. Some 80,000 civilians fled Loder, in southern Yemen, as the offensive got under way. Elsewhere, Yemeni officials sat down to talks with leaders of a long-standing Shi'ite insurgency in the country's north.

10 | Greenland

Natural Gas Found off Coast

Scotland-based Cairn Energy announced Aug. 24 that it had discovered small amounts of gas off the western coast of Greenland, an area that many believe to be the last great frontier in the quest for natural resources. This summer's Gulf of Mexico disaster has left environmentalists wary, though. So despite the fact that Cairn has yet to find any crude, Greenpeace dispatched a ship in an attempt to disrupt future offshore drilling. Greenland's waters are relatively untouched, and wells drilled in the past have proved dry. However, Cairn says it has found "early indications of a working hydrocarbon system" in Baffin Bay.

* | What They're Taxing in Philadelphia: Bloggers in the City of Brotherly Love will now be required to pay $50 a year (or a onetime flat fee of $300) for a "business-privilege license," as well as taxes on any blog-related profits. Although the license fee applies only to websites that host ads or otherwise generate revenue, it doesn't differentiate between highly profitable sites and those that earn just a few dollars a
year. Naturally, Web writers are up in arms, though the city points out that it treats traditional freelance writers the same way.

ONE NATION

Obama on Social Security: Ending Bipartisanship Hopes

By MARK HALPERIN Monday, Aug. 23, 2010

President Barack Obama delivers a speech in Washington, D.C., on June 11, 2010

Charles Dharapak / AP

In a move as predictable as Lucy pulling the football away from Charlie Brown, Democrats are using Social Security scare tactics to gain ground before the November election. President Barack Obama is not only tolerating this classic old politics maneuver by his party — he is leading the charge.

Amid a flurry of Democratic Party news releases and press conferences warning voters that Republicans are targeting Social Security for destruction, the President devoted his radio and Internet address last week to commemorating the 75th anniversary of the signing of the law that created the program. He cautioned that "some Republican leaders in Congress don't seem to have learned any lessons" from the past and are "pushing to make privatizing Social Security a key part of their legislative agenda if they win a majority in Congress." This familiar refrain might indeed help the Democrats limit their midterm losses, but Obama's involvement shows that on this issue he is putting party before bipartisanship and that he sometimes can be tone-deaf to the human element required to change Washington's acid culture.

It is clear why Democrats are raising the specter of Republican efforts to alter Social Security. This tactic has worked in the past, as older voters — who typically turn out at the polls in higher percentages, especially in midterm years — tend to trust Democrats more than Republicans to protect the cherished
retirement program. And given the weak economy, Obama's mushy poll numbers and the lack of traction on the White House's legislative achievements, it is no surprise that Democratic leaders would turn to the tried-and-true tactic. Also, with some prominent Republicans still calling for a fundamental change to the system by adding private accounts, the GOP has opened itself up to political attack.

But Obama is living in a parallel Vulcan universe if he thinks he and his strategists can spend the next two months using campaign appearances, advertising, robocalls and other voter communication to demonize Republicans on Social Security, and then turn around in January and try to make a deal on that same issue.

A bipartisan partnership on Social Security — as on every other tough issue, including Afghanistan, immigration, energy, education, deficit reduction and jobs — is going to require trust: trust between the President and Republican leaders to stand up jointly to the extreme forces in Congress and at the grass roots in both their parties, meet in the center, take some political risks and find creative compromises to get things done. On Social Security, that means Obama will have to support raising the retirement age and cutting some benefits, while Republicans will have to back some increased taxation. And they will have to work together and present a united front.

It is hard to imagine that Obama can be the leader of such a process in 2011 if he takes the current, sky-high level of personal and political mistrust and elevates it further by using Social Security as a weapon of distortion in September and October. And yet it appears that the White House believes there is no contradiction or connection between those two sequential presidential goals. Obama may be a hyper-rational guy, but his current rhetoric on Social Security defies logic if he wants to have a productive 2011.

Democrats Face Uphill Battle in Arkansas

By MICHAEL CROWLEY Thursday, Aug. 26, 2010
Blanche Lincoln was the talk of Washington in spring, with Democrats watching as a union-funded challenge by liberal Lieut. Governor Bill Halter nearly took down a sitting Senator who had infuriated the left with her party-bucking record. Bill Clinton rode to her rescue with a big endorsement, and Lincoln fended off Halter — barely — back in June.

Now Lincoln is trailing her Republican challenger, Representative John Boozman, by anywhere from 25 to 38 points in polls, and Democrats don't see a credible comeback scenario in a state where President Obama is deeply unpopular.

There are some bright spots for Lincoln: she has a far fatter war chest than Boozman and just began her television ad campaign. She showed more grit and fight in the primary than many expected. And Clinton, who invented the Arkansas comeback, is sure to take the fight personally.

Boozman's stinging attacks on Lincoln as a left-wing Obamacare supporter have taken their toll. Meanwhile, the White House is under fire for seeking $1.5 billion in disaster relief for farmers in Arkansas and neighboring states — a move critics say would amount to a taxpayer-funded subsidy for Lincoln's campaign. The election forecaster Nate Silver says Lincoln has a better chance of winning in November than the Democrats' strange and accidental nominee in South Carolina, Alvin Greene — "[but] only slightly." Ouch.

Will the White House Fight to End the Cuba Travel Ban?

By Tim Padgett / Miami Monday, Aug. 23, 2010

After it looked a couple of months ago as if a bill lifting the ban on U.S. travel to Cuba had the momentum to pass Congress, it now appears stalled in the House of Representatives. The bill, which would also make food sales to Cuba easier, cleared the House Agriculture Committee but still needs a vote in two other committees — Financial Services and Foreign Affairs — and it may not even come up for a full vote this year. So as reports surface that the Obama Administration plans on its own to expand legal travel opportunities to Cuba, the question is whether such a move will spur or spoil the House bill — whose passage would mark the biggest shift in U.S. Cuba policy since a trade embargo was issued against the communist island in 1962.
President Obama, according to Administration and congressional sources, intends before the year is out to loosen restrictions on visits to Cuba by U.S. students, entertainers and other goodwill ambassadors. Backers of increased American engagement with Cuba applaud the proposal, which is part of the President's executive prerogative under the embargo. In reality, the action would simply be taking U.S. policy back to the Clinton Administration, before former President George W. Bush all but froze that kind of people-to-people contact with Cuba. But it's less clear if Obama intends his new regulations to be a signal of support for eliminating the entire travel ban — which only Congress can do — or an unspoken message that this is as far as he wants to take the battle against the embargo's dogged supporters on Capitol Hill.

Cuban flags fly beside the U.S. Interests Section office in Havana

Desmond Boylan / Reuters

The bill's bipartisan backers, not surprisingly, see it as the former. House staffers say the White House Cuba regulations will be a shot in the arm for the broader travel legislation when Congress returns from its recess next month. Embargo foes agree. "This is the Administration essentially saying, 'We've done what we can, and now we want Congress to take the larger step,'" says Jake Colvin, vice president for global trade issues at the independent National Foreign Trade Council in Washington, D.C. "This bill still has a lot of hurdles, but this implicit White House support gives it momentum again."

Echoing the optimism is Patrick Kilbride, senior director for the Americas at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The organization represents a sizable bloc of farmers and businesspeople, many of them Republican-aligned, who want the Cuba embargo scrapped so they can reap the $1 billion in annual sales to the island that a recent Texas A&M University study says they're losing out on. "We think these new [travel] steps are a very positive signal that the [Administration] would like to move forward" to lift the full travel ban, says Kilbride. He also confirms that the chamber is considering scoring the votes of Representatives and Senators if and when the bill finally hits their floors.

The House bill seems slowed at this point by more serious opposition from the chamber's pro-embargo forces and especially the pro-embargo lobby, led by the US-Cuba Democracy PAC, a major contributor to congressional campaigns. The Senate version, which deals only with the travel ban, has yet to get a Foreign Relations Committee vote and most likely faces a filibuster from pro-embargo Senators if it can ever get to the full chamber.
But another reason to be confident, says Colvin, is that "this is the best diplomatic environment we've seen in a long time" for dismantling the embargo. That's because last month, Cuban President Raúl Castro, after a dissident hunger striker died earlier this year, released 52 political prisoners who were locked up in 2003 by his elder brother, then President Fidel Castro (who ceded power to Raúl in 2006 due to ill health). Obama last year had left the ball in Havana's court when he reversed his predecessor's policy and let Cuban Americans travel and send remittances more freely to Cuba. Raúl's prisoner release, say diplomats, now makes the next move Obama's, and many see his new travel regulations as part of that. But it's doubtful the Castros will feel international pressure to reciprocate, with further democratic or economic openings in Cuba, unless the travel ban that's been in place since 1963 is eradicated.

Proponents of doing just that insist there's more consensus than ever in the U.S. to ditch the Cuba embargo and its travel ban, which, after almost 50 years, have utterly failed to dislodge the Castro regime. Opening Cuba to Americans, they believe, will do more to stimulate democratization there than isolating it has. Even a majority of Cuban Americans now agree.

Still, for all the good vibes the bill's backers feel from the White House right now, some note warily that Obama has been loath to spend political capital in Cuba, or the rest of Latin America for that matter. Critics, for example, point to his decision last year to stop applying pressure against coup leaders in Honduras, who'd ousted a leftist President, when conservative Republicans in Congress objected.

Embargo supporters, including Cuban-American Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey, a Democrat, are already blasting Obama's plans to relax Cuba travel. "This is not the time to ease the pressure on the Castro regime," Menendez said this month, insisting it will only give the brothers "a much needed infusion of dollars that will only extend their reign of oppression." As a result, says one congressional aide who asked not to be identified, when it comes time for the White House to give the bill more full-throated support, "there's a fear they may just decide that the fight's not worth it."

But Democratic Congressman Howard Berman of California, a co-sponsor of the bill, says tearing down the travel ban is about more than Cuban rights — it's also about the constitutional rights of U.S. citizens to travel freely abroad. "Letting U.S. citizens travel to Cuba is not a gift to the Castros — it is in the interest of our own citizens," Berman said after the House committee vote this summer. "It's time to trust our own people and restore their right to travel." It's the sort of argument Obama usually agrees with. But now he may need to show how strongly he concurs when Congress returns next month.
Stem-cell research took two giant steps backward when a federal judge ruled that the Obama Administration's expanded funding for the field violates a 1996 law that prohibits using taxpayer dollars for studies in which human embryos are harmed or destroyed. The White House is appealing the decision, but the ruling has forced the National Institutes of Health to halt new grant approvals for studies of embryonic stem cells.

Until this ruling, both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations had assumed that the law applied only to the creation of embryonic stem (ES) cells, which requires the destruction of human embryos, and not to studying the cells once they're generated. In 2001, Bush restricted government funding to two dozen or so existing cell lines. Last year, Obama expanded that number.

ES cells could be coaxed into becoming healthy replacements for damaged ones in diseases such as diabetes and Parkinson's. The latest ruling is a severe threat to that work, in part because federal dollars represent the largest source of financial support for the field. If the White House appeal fails, Congress could step in to change the 1996 law.

TOBACCO

Don't Smoke at Me

Smokers know that lighting up can put them at greater risk for cancer and other lung diseases. But the latest research shows that they may also be putting those who inhale their secondhand smoke at greater risk of the same ills than we ever knew.

Researchers at Weill Cornell Medical College and Cornell University in New York City have documented the first evidence of genetic changes in the airway cells of nonsmokers exposed to secondhand cigarette smoke. In a study of 121 volunteers who provided samples of their airway cells for genetic testing, the scientists found that 11% of the genes known to respond to cigarette smoke in these cells were active in both the smokers and the nonsmokers, suggesting that similar changes might be occurring in both groups.

While it's not yet clear what these changes mean, the researchers speculate they could signal the molecular beginnings of lung disease or lung cancer. "When you look at the biology, there is no safe level
of exposure to tobacco smoke," says the study's lead author, Dr. Ronald Crystal. That's particularly worrisome since previous studies have hinted that such genetic alterations may not be reversible in smokers even after they kick the habit. Still, says Crystal, the study should bolster efforts to ban smoking in public spaces and even encourage family members to give up the habit in the home.

FROM THE LABS

Sparking Spuds

We boil them, mash them, bake them and even make them into hash. So why not zap potatoes with a jolt of electricity? When Japanese researchers did just that, they found that the current boosted the antioxidant levels of the tubers, potentially providing a new way to make them more nutritious. The electricity seems to mimic environmental stresses that normally push the potato plant to produce antioxidants and prevent oxidative damage to its cells.

Diabetes and Dementia

People in the earliest stages of Type 2 diabetes, in which the body makes insulin but is resistant to its effects, could be at greater risk of forming the plaques in the brain that are typically found in those with Alzheimer's disease. That means those at risk for diabetes might avoid dementia later by taking tighter control of their blood sugar.

GOT GARLIC? GET MILK

Feasting on a garlic-infused meal is a sure way to win yourself some alone time. But if you'd like to get the health benefits of garlic and keep your friends, try drinking a glass of milk along with it. A study found that milk lowers the concentration of volatile odor-emitting compounds from garlic in the nose and mouth. And it's best to make it whole milk: fat is an effective deodorizer.

Verbatim

'This jet, before it heralds death for enemies, is the messenger of salvation and dignity for humanity.'

MAHMOUD AHMADINEJAD, Iranian President, referring to his military's new unmanned drone, which has a range of more than 600 miles (970 km)

'If people know where you are, they know where you're not.'

RAINEY REITMAN, spokeswoman for San Diego--based Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, on Facebook's new Places feature, which shares the location of users with their online friends.
'I cannot surrender now simply because an obstacle has been set before me.'

Wyclef Jean, musician, vowing to fight the declaration by Haiti's electoral council that he is ineligible to run for President in the country's November election; the following day, a council lawyer announced that Jean could not appeal, calling it "a waste of time"

'The President says he's a Christian. I take him at his word.'

Mitch McConnell, Senate minority leader, responding to a recent poll that found that a growing number of Americans believe President Obama is a Muslim even though he has repeatedly asserted his Christian beliefs

'You need someone to say, "I know what they mean when they say ballin' or pinching pennies."

Michael Sanders, DEA special agent, on the search for Ebonics translators to help interpret wiretapped conversations involving targets of drug investigations

'If there's no traffic jam in the city, that would be news.'

Niuyu Fengrui, of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, on a 60-mile (97 km) bottleneck—one made up of thousands of cars heading into Beijing—that lasted 10 days before it was broken up

'It's just a cat, at the end of the day.'

Mary Bale, a British woman, saying she doesn't "deserve to be hated by people all over the world," after an online video showing her putting a cat in a trash can earned her death threats

Talking Heads

Roger Ebert

Weighing in on the controversial mosque near Ground Zero, in the Chicago Sun-Times:

"I wonder how many Americans realize the community center is not intended for Ground Zero. [Instead], what will be constructed there includes a 55,000-sq.-ft. [5,100 sq m] retail mall. This mall will be deep enough to connect with subway lines—deep enough, that is, to theoretically be embedded in the ashes of some of the 9/11 victims."

--8/19/10

Alberto Gonzales

The former Attorney General calling for immigration reform, in the Washington Post:

"I am a descendant of immigrants and a grateful beneficiary of the opportunities available to our nation's citizens ... Today, however, there is virtually universal agreement that our immigration process is
broken ... Even my apolitical and saintly 78-year-old mother wonders whether the Democrats are keeping this issue on the table ... hoping that Republicans will propose enforcement measures that alienate Hispanic voters."

--8/22/10

Con Coughlin

Writing in the Telegraph about the precarious situation in Pakistan:

"If ever a country were ripe for a coup, it is Pakistan. The besieged government of President Asif Ali Zardari is assailed on all fronts by man-made conflict and natural disaster, and there is a palpable sense in Islamabad that the return of the generals to the presidential palace would come as something of a relief."

--8/25/10

Sources: Sky News; Guardian; CNN; NBC; AP; Global Times (China); Guardian

Brief History: Food Recalls

By CLAIRE SUDDATH Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

New egg safety standards went into effect in July; regular salmonella testing is now required.

Kang Kim / Gallery Stock

What began on Aug. 13 as a recall of 228 million salmonella-tainted eggs has expanded to cover more than half a billion eggs produced by two Iowa companies--making it the largest such recall in U.S. history.
Yet despite the frenzy that now often follows allegations of unsafe fare, organized, company-driven callbacks were hardly the norm during the early days of industrialized food.

It took years of advocacy and outrage, capped by The Jungle, Upton Sinclair’s muckraking work on the meatpacking industry, to spur Congress into passing the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. The landmark law established standards for the transportation, inspection and labeling of food and led to the eventual creation of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The first major national food recall occurred in 1920, when an outbreak of botulism linked to improperly canned olives compelled the government to pull the product. Just before Thanksgiving in 1959, the FDA seized cranberries laced with a potentially cancer-causing weed killer and advised consumers not to purchase the holiday staple.

These days, the rise of factory farms and agribusiness has magnified the potential scope of an outbreak. When something goes awry, recalls can span continents. Britain’s 1986 discovery of mad-cow disease led to an eventual ban on British meat in the European Union. And in 2008, the presence of the poisonous chemical melamine in several Chinese dairy products caused food to be pulled from shelves worldwide.

The FDA has planned extensive egg-farm inspections to combat the recent salmonella scare, but the fact that the bacteria’s source remains unknown has made an outbreak-weary public ever more distrustful of an industry accused of lax oversight. Egg lovers might want to switch from sunny-side up to hard-boiled—at least for a little while.

The Skimmer

By KAYLA WEBLEY Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

The Pain Chronicles

By Melanie Thernstrom Farrar, Straus & Giroux; 364 pages

Pain is one of the most common reasons we go to the doctor. Yet in the U.S., there is only one board-certified pain specialist for every 25,000 pain patients. If you are one of the more than 70 million Americans who suffer from chronic hurt, The Pain Chronicles could very well be the first time you hear from someone who speaks your language. Thernstrom skillfully paints a portrait of pain as an inescapable, all-consuming demon, though for those lucky enough to have experienced the sensation only as a momentary affliction, such never-ending hurt may sound foreign or even fake. Her thorough history of anguish is full of cringe-worthy anecdotes: In the 1800s, body parts were regularly lopped off without an anesthetic, and today, Hindu pilgrims skewer themselves in the name of their gods. Having initially charted her struggle with chronic neck pain for the New York Times Magazine, Thernstrom knows of what she writes, ultimately offering a well-crafted argument for why doctors should stop treating pain as a symptom and start seeing it as a potentially curable disease.
Frank Kermode, who died Aug. 17 at 90, was England's best-known and most admired literary critic. It does not, I suppose, speak altogether well of my profession that he seemed almost startling in his unpretentiousness, lucidity and common sense. Impressively learned, he was determined to write not only for academic specialists but also for that most elusive audience, the broad reading public.

He did so not by making himself into an omnipresent television personality or by contriving to talk down to his readers but rather by finding ways to convey in clear, cool prose the significance of literary pleasure. Among his many works, his most familiar is probably the brilliant book The Sense of an Ending (1967), with its subtle reflections on the ways in which the chaos of everyday existence is fashioned into coherent narratives. But my personal favorite is Shakespeare's Language (2000), a luminous account of how Shakespeare achieves his mysterious effects.

One of Kermode's books is called Forms of Attention, a title that highlights the peculiar, quiet intensity of his observations, both on the page and--for those of us who knew him--in person. He always seemed to me to hold himself at a slight distance even from his own life, as if to get whatever he was observing more sharply into focus.

But perhaps this distance was only a sign of his sense of himself as an outsider. Though in the course of his long career he received a plethora of honors, including knighthood, he always retained the perspective of a person born on the Isle of Man, the son of a warehouse worker and a former waitress. His wry, quizzical autobiography is called Not Entitled.

George David Weiss

By LUIGI CREATORE Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

He was the American Songwriter. That was his life. That's all George, who died Aug. 23 at 89, wanted to do. We were walking down Broadway many years ago, and I was humming something, and he said to me, "Why are you singing that? We didn't write that!" He was immersed in writing songs. There were three of us in a team--Hugo Peretti, myself and George. We'd get in a room and start batting around ideas, and by the time we finished, I couldn't tell you who wrote what.

Elvis' publishers asked us to write a song because they thought we had a feel for the type of scene they were doing in Blue Hawaii. Elvis' character had come back from Europe, and he had a music box, and he sang this song along with it. So we wrote "Can't Help Falling in Love" tailor-made to that tune. And Elvis liked it right away.

Bob Thiele, a producer at another label, asked him to write a song for Louis Armstrong, and one day George asked if I'd mind if he did that. I said, "No, that's what you do. You're a songwriter." So he went away and co-wrote a song called "What a Wonderful World."

George--who played several instruments and served as the president of the Songwriters Guild of America for nearly 20 years--was extremely talented. He did whatever was necessary to write songs. And the world is more wonderful for it.

Creatore's new off-Broadway play is An Error of the Moon

Settled

By ALEXANDRA SILVER Monday, Sep. 06, 2010

SETTLED

Three years after the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis collapsed, more than 100 of the injured, along with relatives of the 13 killed, reached an agreement with engineering firm URS Corp. The company, which did not construct the 40-year-old bridge but had been hired to inspect it, will pay out more than $52 million, adding to the funds already paid to victims by the state of Minnesota and another firm. While URS does not admit fault, it will avoid a trial that had been scheduled for next spring.
In a decision that seemed inevitable after Tiger Woods' jaw-dropping revelations of infidelity last year, Elin Nordegren divorced the world's No. 1 golfer on Aug. 23. The two, whose marriage was described as "irretrievably broken" in divorce papers, plan to share custody of their two children, Sam and Charlie. Since the Nov. 27 early-morning car accident involving Woods outside their Florida home—which led to months of tabloid gossip—he has juggled divorce proceedings, therapy and playing on the PGA Tour. Woods, who has not won since late last year, is in danger of losing his No. 1 ranking.
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